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SUBJECT: USAU: AU'S URGENT REQUEST TO EQUIP AMISOM, SOMALI FORCES

REF: 08 KAMPALA 1665

Classified By: Ambassador John A. Simon, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This cable contains an Action Request in paragraph 10.

12. (U) Summary: The African Union is asking the international community, principally the US, EU, and UK, to commit immediate financial and logistical support not only to AMISOM, but also to a 10,000 strong joint security force composed of Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalis (ARS) elements. The Somali forces would act as a buffer between AMISOM and the hard-line opposition forces, and they would also fill the void left by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces that are withdrawing from Somalia. The AU has invited the US, EU, and UK to a meeting on January 17 in Addis Ababa to discuss their respective commitments to AMISOM as well as to the Somali security forces. End Summary.

13. (U) On January 10, the AU hosted a meeting of AMISOM Troop Contributing Countries (Burundi and Uganda), Somalia, the UN, and Ethiopia (in its capacity as Chair of the International Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to review the political and security situation in Somalia and the status of AMISOM's build-up. Burundi and Uganda sent their defense ministers, General Germain Niyoyankana and Crispus Kiyonga, and Somalia sent its deputy prime minister and minister of defense, Abdallah Boss Ahmed. Also present were Nicolas Bwakira, Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Somalia, and ARS representative Mohamed Abdi Mohamed "Ghandi."

14. (U) Briefings on the political and security situation in Somalia laid out the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. On the political front, efforts are reportedly under way to form an expanded parliament that would elect a new president and other senior government officials.

The process leading to the election is scheduled to take place in Djibouti from January 20-26. The election itself will be held on January 26. On the security front, the Somali representatives at the meeting asserted that there had been a significant threat reduction in the country, particularly in Mogadishu. The UN and Ugandan representatives corroborated this assessment. Nonetheless, participant expressed concern about the threat posed by Al-Shabaab, particularly in the event Somali and AMISOM forces are not adequately equipped. As far as USAU is aware, there was no discussion about withdrawing AMISOM.

15. (SBU) Meeting participants also received a briefing on a proposed full package of assistance by the UN to AMISOM. The UN is currently in the process of carrying out a Technical Assessment Mission to ascertain AMISOM's specific needs. Meeting participants wanted to know when the UNSC would adopt a resolution authorizing a UN Peacekeeping Operation in Somalia. Uganda, the UNSC's newest non-permanent member, was particularly insistent on the need for an eventual UNPKO role. "It's the only chance to save Somalia," Peace and Security Council Secretary

Admore Kambudzi told USAU PolChief following the meeting. Without the UN, he added, "Al-Shabaab will gain ground and we will back to the situation in 2002."

¶6. (SBU) The AU and AMISOM troop contributing countries remain firmly committed to the planned deployment of two additional battalions. Burundi and Uganda reiterated their call for additional equipment necessary to carry out their mission. Uganda's Permanent Representative to the AU, Ambassador Mull Katende, told USAU after the meeting that the equipment provided to the Ugandan battalion to date was insufficient.

"For the kind of mission we are in, it won't do," he said, echoing what Ugandan defense officials have told our Embassy in Kampala (see reftel). They also sought assurances from the AU regarding timely payment of salaries and reimbursements.

¶7. (C) In addition, meeting participants called on the international community to "redouble its commitments" toward the functioning of a 10,000 strong joint security force composed of TFG and ARS elements.

USAU has learned that the Somali Defense Minister envisions placing six battalions, each with 500 to 600 men, in positions formerly held by Ethiopian troops.

Without immediate support from the international community, those Somali forces could hold out between 30 to 45 days, the Defense Minister said.

The logistical support would include food, accommodations, equipment, and medical supplies. "Financial incentives" are also being sought. (Note: On January 11, AUC Special Representative Bwakira asked USAU if the USG could take the lead on supplying food rations for the AMISOM and Somali forces. End Note.) The Somali Defense Minister reportedly told the gathering on January 10 that his forces would "die first" in order to protect AMISOM forces.

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¶8. (C) Bwakira told USAU that the parallel calls for support to AMISOM and to Somali forces are justified given the different mandates of the two forces. "Our biggest concern is over the delay in the delivery of equipment needed by AMISOM," Bwakira added, referring to the anticipated late January arrival of US-supplied light equipment for use by the Ugandan and Burundian battalions. Heavier equipment, such as armored personnel vehicles, will take at least four months to reach Somalia. Bwakira said the mere fact that AMISOM only has four battalions on the ground to date where it should have nine argues for standing up the Somali forces. "The Somali situation is an emergency situation right now," he stressed,

¶9. (U) The same participants decided to reconvene on January 17 in an expanded format to include the US, EU, and UK. The international partners will be asked to discuss their respective commitments to AMISOM and to the Somali forces. Separately, our AU interlocutors informed us that AUC Chairperson Jean Ping will be traveling this week to the Gulf (Qatar in particular) to appeal to Arab states for their support.

¶10. (C) Action Request and Comment: Given the urgency of the request, USAU seeks detailed guidance from the Department, preferably no later than COB on January 15. Specifically, USAU requires detail on what commitments it can make on January 17 with respect to equipping and supporting the Somali forces identified by the Somali Minister of Defense. The request for support for the Somali forces potentially raises questions about vetting of those forces, about whose command they would fall under, and financial and equipment accountability mechanisms that would need to be put in place. In addressing the funding for Somali forces, we should consider how Algeria's offer of an airlift for AMISOM could free up USG resources that could then be devoted to beefing up the Somali forces.

¶11. (C) Comment continued: While the deliberations at the January 10 meeting offered some reason for optimism on the political and security fronts in Somalia, our AU interlocutors, as well as representatives from troop contributing countries, were consistent in their view that Somalia remains precarious. The AU is counting on the US to fulfill our existing commitment to adequately equip and transport the additional AMISOM battalions. They are fully aware of the time it will take for US-supplied equipment to reach Somalia. The US, EU, and UK will want to evaluate the latest, and not entirely unexpected, request for logistical support for 10,000 Somali forces, but that request should in no way detract from our existing commitments to AMISOM. We cannot afford to take our foot off the accelerator. End Comment.

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